

On Saturday, blue skies and a gentle sun replaced the cold gray of Friday, and tears replaced the steady rain.

At the corner of Connetquot Street and Miami Road in Oakdale, dozens gathered under a street sign wrapped in blue canvas. They gathered to remember Matthew Baylis, who was killed in Iraq one year ago, on May 31, 2007. There was a bagpiper and veterans bearing flags. There was the Islip Town Supervisor Phil Nolan and Councilman Chris Bodkin. Most important was the presence of Matt's parents, Rich and Laurie, his brother Mark, and his grandmother. They embraced cousins and neighbors, people who grew up with Matt or watched him grow up in the small house on the corner, near the street-sign.

Many of them cried as Councilman Bodkin reached for the sign with a pole and removed the canvass. Then, the sun glinted off the new sign honoring Matthew Baylis.

I have attended many of these ceremonies, and each is special in its own way. Here, children wore black T-shirts proclaiming, "Matt Baylis. Never Forgotten." Matt's faced beamed from those shirts - determined, proud and confident.

I have seen that face many times, during my visits to visit servicemembers in Iraq and Afghanistan, at forward operating bases and firebases, at airfields and on an aircraft carrier, in Blackhawk helicopters and dining halls.

And now I see it again, on T-shirts worn in a quiet Oakdale neighborhood, forever changed by the loss of the kid who lived on the corner.

It isn't easy for anyone who attends these ceremonies. Nor is it easy to summon the right words for occasions like this. Prepared remarks seem artificial so I am always unsure of what I will say.

As the ceremony begins, I gaze at Matt's portrait on the T-shirts. "Matt Baylis. Never Forgotten." I think of another reminder of eternal sacrifice. I share the view I occasionally see when my plane descends onto Washington each week: the sprawling, seemingly endless expanse of graves at Arlington National Cemetery. There, men and women have rested since the Civil War. There, many have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan. I tell Matt's friends and family how it is so fitting to fly over Arlington on my way to the Floor of the House.

Arlington Cemetery serves as a profound reminder to me when I assume my duties in Congress. And now, on a gentle morning that I believe Matt Baylis gave us, after the harsh rains and winds of the prior day, the sun shines on a street sign bearing his name.

Matt Baylis. Never Forgotten.